AMBIGUITY OF ISOLATION

IN *THE MAN WHO LOVED ISLANDS*

KOYA SHIMIZU

INTRODUCTION

The Man Who Loved Islands has not always been unanimously evaluated by the critics. Above all there are some different views on the characterization and the self-annihilation theme about Cathcart, the hero of this story. For example we have to confront such a question as follows, "Is Cathcart a hero or a villain?" The severest criticism on Cathcart is shot by F.R.Karl, who asserts that Cathcart as a villain is "a composite of everything Lawrence hated."(1) Julian Moynahan's argument also does not express any sympathy for Cathcart, who is treated by him as Lawrence's "most concentrated image of the disease of human idealism".(2) On the other hand we can point out Kingsley Widmer as a passive defender of Cathcart on whom Widmer considers "The hero is Lawrencean about sexual mystery, the negation of modern society, the longing for a utopian community, and the doctrine of simplicity and solitude,"(3) although he feels implicitly a sort of self-mockery in Cathcart. And the most affirmative upholder of our protagonist may be George H.Ford, who complains about Cathcart-villain theory, "If Cathcart is Lawrentian, can we label him villain? Again we come back to George Orwell's observation that Lawrence's fiction does not feature either heroes or villains."(4) Ford's sympathy with Cathcart stems from his emphatic recognition of Lawrence's biographical situation in those days when this fable was written.(5) Indeed it should be noticed

(1) F.R.Karl, The Crusoe Who Failed", *A D.H.Lawrence Miscellany,* ed. H.T.Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1959), p. 269.

(2) Julian Moynahan, "Lawrence's 'The Man Who Loved Islands': A Modern Fable," *Modern Fiction Studies, 5* (1959), p.60.

(3) Kingsley Widmer, *The Art of Perversity: D.H.Lawrence's Shorter Fictions* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1962), p. 16.

(4) George H.Ford, *Double Measure: A Study of the Novels and Stories of D.H.Lawrence* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p.86.

(5) ibid., pp.83-7.

that Lawrence's alienated feelings are reflected in the characterization of the hero, but Ford's interpretation depends upon the author's personal state of mind too much.

When we take account of Cathcart's consistent posture of denying any true contact with everything and of trying conquest of 'the elements' by dint of his cold will, we find it hard to consider that the author creates Cathcart with a strong sympathy. So far as it goes, it may be judged that our protagonist is, so to speak, the self-negator who is one of descendants of Gerald in *Women in Love,* and the author typically describes Cathcart as a crystallized embodiment of those characters.

Considering the theme of Cathcart's aloneness, we cannot pass over Baruch Hochman's "the radical individualitst vs the radical communalist" theory.(6) As we refer to it in detail later, Hochman defines Lawrence in early age as a radical individualist and him in later years as a radical communalist. About the important works in the last few years of Lawrence's career, however, Hochman does not explain persuasively whether the author was an individualist or a communalist. He states ambivalently on this puzzling problem as follows, "The conclusions —tentative, to be sure—are embodied in *The Plumed Serpent*. The very last fiction—including *Lady Chatterley's Lover*(1927) and *The Man Who Died* (1928) —abandons the communalist theme and even contradicts it. But the essays in *Etruscan Places* and the posthumous *Apocalypse*(1930) continue to echo the essential leadership ideas, though without the earlier emphasis on violence."(7) Such a vagueness as Hochman's does not help us to elucidate the ambiguity of Cathcart's aloneness.

Our basic understanding of the very last phase of Lawrence's fiction is neither his abandonment of the communalist theme nor the simple affirmation of the individualistic ideas, but just a perverse integration of both themes. Considered from such a viewpoint, *The Man Who Loved Islands* demands a particular attention as well as a deliberate reconsideration with reference to other later works. So that we should like to emphasize that this fable occupies a significant position through the process of Lawrence's development from the communalist age to his last year. In

(6) Baruch Hochman, *Another Ego: The Changing View of Self and Society in the Works of D.H.Lawrence* (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1970), pp.1-21; 170-2.
(7) ibid., p.195.

the final analysis we shall come to this conclusion, tentative to be sure: Lawrence can not overcome dialectically the puzzling ambivalence between individualism and communalism until he succeeds in an absolute negation of one dimentional communal theme, and tries an exhaustive pursuit of isolation or alienation in this enigmatic fable.

In that sense, therefore, this short story may be regarded as a clux of a paradoxical completion of Lawrentian identity. What should be paid attention to, moreover, may be 'true-false ambiguity' of both individualism and communalism. We are subtly impressed with the double import of 'true-false' relationship not only in Cathcart's communalistic urge, but in his individualistic drive. *The Man Who Loved Islands* may be recapitulated as the story of the man who could not penetrate into something creative within dissolution, nor get at 'true communality' through 'true annihilation'. In other words, though Cathcart gropes for some bond earnestly in the isolation, his illusional bond turns out to be utterly false; while that bond becomes troublesome for him and instead perforces him to escape into isolation, that isolation also proves to be tragically false. This is just a vicious circle within which the man 'who loved islands' is necessarily destined to be reduced into nothingness. Generally speaking our main aim in this paper is to elucidate the inevitability that without his experience of rather tragic recognition on the absolute falsity suggested in *The Man Who Loved Islands*, Lawrence could have never created these last great works as *The Man Who Died* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

I

Baruch Hochman successfully enlightens two contradicted drives of Lawrentian bias for isolation and for contact, through his individuality-communality theory in *Another Ego*. According to Hochman, Lawrence's stand-point which attaches importance to sex as a measure of pursuing "non-repressive mode of being" is based upon not so much the circuit of history as that of nature. At first he defines early Lawrence as a radical individualist, though Lawrence's idea of individuality has branched off its conception within the liberal tradition. Lawrence was full in pursuit of a utopian individuality. It may be regarded as welling up directly from the matrix of nature; therefore, nature could be experienced in the realm of sexuality. And Hochman asserts Lawrence's utopian individuality brings a solution to the conflict between "spontaneous impulse" and "the stricture of

conscience". In consequence Lawrence considers the human drive of building up society or community as the natural and integral needs and the spontaneous expression of the individuals. So it entails his unique idea of history which may be summarized as the sequence of actions and artifacts which realizes itself through the free and spontaneous self-expression of the individuals.

Lawrence's tragic awareness that men are entrapped within the history and alienated out of nature causes him to despair of resourcing civilization through the heroic efforts of great individuals of which he had been thinking as an ideal. In his view of the modern society all man have been cut off from the wellhead of "creative individudlity". Since the integrating moment of society is dissolving, the isolated individuals have not any other means of reconstructing this corrupted society by dint of their independent efforts.

As the result Lawrence comes to reverse his principal assertion and sets out affirming the so-called "a radical communalism", which may be the initial orientation of the age of "the leadership novels". In this phase nature can be no longer held to express herself through the unique individuals, but rather by virtue of the primary community. Individual, therefore, as being regarded as the core of creative flux, comes in effect to be considered as the indivisible part of a greater social and cosmic whole. Thus as a necessary consequence of the function of individual psyche, myth and symbol are brought into his frame of reference as a mystic entity like Jungian "collective unconscious". Paradoxically speaking, Lawrence grows to take myth and symbol for a "mediating element," through which the individual psyche, within its communal matrix, can confirm the breath-to-breath contact with the cosmic life.

Hochman's explanation of Lawrence's development of the conception on nature, society and individuals is so persuasive that it shows the high achievement in his contribution to our unpenetrating theme. But Hochman's doctrine lacks the balanced references to Lawrence's latest fictions like *Lady Chatterley's Lover, The Man Who Died,* the poems of his final ages and our *The Man Who Loved Islands,* so the destination of Lawrence's development from a radical individualist to a radical communalist is not clarified distinctly by his argument. Basically considered, it may be a little unreasonable to give a clear-cut presentation to his ambiguous antithesis between individuality and communality.

Other critics see through the simultaneous appearence of both the qualities in Lawrence in one degree or another; e.g. Colin Clarke asserts the idea of living disintegration as a joint conception between indivisuality and belongingness;[8]

(8) Colin Clarke, *River of Dissolution : D.H.Lawrence & English Romanticism* (London : Routledge

G.H.Ford expresses this clux as a simultaneous revelation of both "being alone" and "being together,"[9] and K. Widmer's explanation is based upon the organic contrast between "the parable of annihilation" and "the parable of regeneration".[10] On the contrary Hochman's view lays emphasis on the transition of two antithetical orientations of Lawrence's, which is unique and successful with some reservations. Our only criticism on Hochman should be pointed to his comparative neglect of the important fictions of Lawrence's last age. He does not give any persuasive interpretation on whether the conflict between individuality and communality was overcome or not. Indeed he argues that Lawrence resources the living contact with cosmos by means of myth and symbol which are the mediating elements, but through such an explanation we cannot convince ourselves of the inevitability that such an anti-hero as Cathcart should be created at this very time of Lawrence's literary career.

While he offers us suggestions as to the U-turn phenomenon on Lawrence's fictions, in which the important later fictions like *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Man Who Died* recover the old theme of erotic self-fulfillment and express the qualified version of old Lawrentian individuality, on the other hand he mentions that *Apocalypse* and the preface to *The Grand Inqusitor* give full play to the strong communalistic disposition that is the frame of reference defining his fundamental attitude toward the end of his life.

According to Hochman, Lawrence in *The Grand Inquisitor* reaches the furthest limit of "communal consciousness" which is much more advanced than that in *The Plumed Serpent.* In *Apocalypse,* moreover, this thesis is approaching not so much to the political communality as to the mystical communality in which love and power are set antithetical. Power is regarded, in such a frame of reference, as a mystic and vital-electrical bond between men in the communal realm, while love is defined as a force making for individuality and considered as a sort of escape into the secret world of isolated being.[11]

We are forced to feel, however, Hochman's assertion lays too much stress on later Lawrence's communal bias and rather thinks lightly of the individual moment in Lawrence's final phase. One of the most essential factors overlooked by Hochman may be the bankruptcy of the leadership theme in Lawrence. In association with that problem our initial concern should be directed to another

& Kegan Paul, 1969), pp.88-110.
(9) Ford, pp.61-114.
(10) Widmer, pp.3-40 ; 167-215.
(11) Hochman, p.222.

oversight by Hochman, that is, what we call true-false ambiguity of both individuality and communality. From Lawrence's viewpoint for example, the idea of democracy proves to be a typical phenomenon of the false communality, meanwhile the life and death of Cathcart in *The Man Who Loved Islands* may be pointed out as a typical example of the false individuality. This quadripartite relationship among true individuality, false individuality, true communality and false communality—we may call this a double antithesis—has such a quite ambiguous and paradoxical implication that it would be very misleading to schematize this subject simply into a one-dimentional definition. In the following two chapters we shall try to illuminate the communality and individuality of the hero Cathcart from the above-mentioned viewpoint.

II

Before our scrutiny of the true-false ambiguity of the hero in this fiction, we should give a brief explanation of our hypothetical definition on both true communality and false communality. Needless to say, in order to distinguish true communality from false one, we could not get at the clux of this puzzling theme without a due consideration of two antithetical forms of individuality. First of all our strategy, however, is to examine two antagonistic appearances of communality lest we should get confused at the complexity and the ambivalence of this subject.

The one type of communality viewed by Lawrence in his age of the leadership novels may be considered to become "true" only on the occasion of procuring a "breath-to-breath contact" with the cosmic flux through myth and symbol. In other words the old religions dominated by myth and old beliefs marked with rituals are endowed with a sustained kinship with the cosmos. In that situation what should not be overlooked is the so-called Lawrentian "power-mode," which is the feature presented typically in *The Plumed Serpent.* To be more precise, the integration of the world must be organically carried out by the powerful leaders who belong to the first-rate class of each society. Consequently Lawrence seems to take it for granted that each society should be based upon the pyramidal ruling system that is situated hieratically according to one's ability.

On the other hand in *The Man Who Loved Islands* we find a subtle transition on Lawrentian idea of communality. While Lawrence grows to deepen his faith in necessity of the breath-to-breath contact with the cosmos through myth and symbol, he comes to aspire eagerly after "the reciprocity of tenderness" instead of "the reciprocity of power." His letter to Dorothy Brett tells us much aptly his

change of sentiment as follows:

> I'm afraid the whole business of leaders and followers is somehow wrong, now. Like the demon-drive, even Leadership must die, and be born different, later on... then it will be born again, perhaps, new and changed, and based on reciprocity of tenderness. The reciprocity of power is obsolete. When you get down to the basis of life, to the depth of the warm creative stir, there is no power.[12]

As a consequence the necessary condition for "the true communality" may be the mystic contact with the cosmos without "the power mode."

Now we begin with examining our Cathcart's communality at the first island. Certainly he should be called a communalist in a sense, for he would build up gradually an ideal community so that it may "regain Paradise"(725)[13] Cathcart's first employees brought into the island are "a buxom housekeeper" and "a soft spoken butler." And a bailiff, with two farm-hands" and Jersey cows are added as the dwellers; then in the end cottage live the skipper of the yacht, and his wife and son; in the middle cottage are an old carpenter and wife; in the third cottage lives a mason with a son and two daughters. These are the whole crew of this small community.(725-6)

Here we find Cathcart quite satisfied with the situation, for this community is composed of such an appropriate number of inhabitants that it nearly fulfills his desirable condition, that is, an island all of his own: not necessarily to be alone on it, but to make it a world of his own."(722) The author describes the peaceful appearance of this little community as follows;

> Well then, it was a little world to itself, and everybody feeling very safe, and being very nice to you, as if you were really something special. But it was the islander's world, not yours. He was the Master. The special smile, the special attention was to the Master. They all knew how well off they were. (726)

In this quotation, however, we cannot help perceiving the serious flaw of Cathcart's community. First of all the hero feels quite self-complacent with being called the Master. He who escapes from the outer world rules triumphantly this tiny refuge

(12) D.H.Lawrence, *The Letters of D.H.Lawrence* ed. and introd. A.Huxley (London: Heinemann, 1932), pp.701-5.

(13) D.H.Lawrence, "The Man Who Loved Islands": *The Complete Short Stories Vol.3*, The Phoenix Edition Vol.13 (London: Heinemann, 1958), p.725. References to the novel cited only by number throughout the paper will be from this edition.

as a leader or a dictator in which we feel an ironical remnant of the leadership novels. Not only that we take notice of the radical contrast between Cathcart and the hero of *The Man Who Died* who dislikes extremely to be called the Master. When 'the man who died' was called "Master!" by Madeleine, he answered;

> • • • But now I am glad it is over, and the day of my interference is done. The teacher and the saviour are dead in me; now I can go about my business, into my own single life.(14)

Here is expressed a detached and isolated posture which is gained through overcoming the conception of authority or leadership. On the contrary Cathcart enjoys the comfortable situation in slippered ease when the management of the island is well off for a while;

> Well, it as ideal. The Master was no tyrant. Ah, no! He was a delicate, sensitive, handsome Master, who wanted everything perfect and everybody happy. Himself, of course, to be the fount of this happiness and perfection.(726)

Under sucn a happy and friendly appearance of the community, however, we are forced to perceive a subtle malice or an obscure insult as follows:

> The sad fact is, alas, that general goodwill is always felt as something of an insult, by the mere object of it; and so it breeds a quite special brand of malice. Surely general goodwill is a form of egoism, that it should have such a result! (727)

In this quotation the bond among all islanders is suggested to be not always "true," that is, under the favorable surface a hidden disintegration increases gradually.

One day Cathcart experiences quite unexpectedly a momentous accident in which a cow falls over the cliff. This is so symbolic in this island that, with this happening as a clue, the warm and happy relationship of the members of the community proves to be merely an illusion. And then many other accidents successively follow, that is to say, a man breaks a leg, another is crippled with rheumatic fever. The pigs have some strange disease. A storm drives the yacht on a rock. The mason hates the butler, and refuses to let his daughter serve at the house, etc. The author describes the declining state of affairs of this community;

---

(14) D.H.Lawrence, "The Man Who Died": *The Short Novels Vol.2,* The Phoenix Edition Vol.15 (London: Heinemann, 1956), p.14.

> Out of the very air came a stony, heavy malevolence. The island itself seemed malicious. It would go on being hurtful and evil for weeks at a time. (730)

On account of this affair the Master's leadership falls to the ground, so that he can not stem the tide of disintegration of his community, because the master's egoism casues his authority inevitably to bring about the employee's repulsion as a counteraction. This not only means the literal bankruptcy of the so-called leadership-mode, but also suggests that Lawrentian conception of communality by virtue of power-mode fails in realizing of its ideal. Since Cathcart's community has not such an integrity as a breath-to-breath contact with the cosmos at all, his utopian fancy is entirely betrayed. In this respect we find his community untrue.

Then our next step of scrutiny proceeds to why he cannot construct the true community which he had imagined. Considering this problem we confront the second fatal flaw of Cathcart, that is, Cathcart's inability to recognize justifiably Lawrentian spirit of place. The following quotation may be an appropriate example:

> Something of this happened to our islander. Mysterious 'feelings' came upon him, that he wasn't used to; strange awarenesses of old far-gone men, and other influences; men of Gaul, with big moustaches, who had been on his island, and had vanished from the face of it, but not of the air of night. (724)

This strange awareness of Cathcart's begins just after he transfers to the first island, where he feels an uncanny fear and bottomless uneasiness. Cathcart's attitude runs counter to the awareness of true communality in which we should seek after the bond to the mystery coiling itself in the core of the cosmos. In fact his effort of the materialistic improvement of the circumstances of the island may be regarded as his struggling escape from the weird atmosphere and the gruesome influences of this island. "The true community" imagined by Lawrence, contrary to this, should be completed through the positive absorption in the dark, weird and unfathomable mystery.

Although the hero's fear-striken awareness toward the spirit of place is temporarily got through by means of a make-believe communality and a pretended bond, with the lapse of time the hero's material bankruptcy and the disintegration of the human relations among the islanders grow severe. In parallel with those phenomena the very island, the nature itself, becomes a "treacherous enemy" to Cathcart. His fear of the spirit of place grows as follows:

> The island was still mysterious and fascinating. But it was also treacherous and cruel, secretly, fathomlessly malevolent. In spite of all its fair show of white blossom and bluebells, and the lovely dignity of foxgloves bending their rose-red bells, it was your implacable enemy. (732)

Thus we find two reasons why Cathcart has to escape from the first island: the first is his failure in having a flesh and blood contact with other islanders, the second is his inability to hold the integrating bond with nature. The man tries to persist in his self-contentment as the Master as well as the God of a self-completed world, while his island itself has its own spirit and reality: that is, he can never force his own egoistic assertion on nature.

The initial problem in the second island with reference to our given theme may be Cathcart's affair with the widow's daughter. This trouble comes about not so much from "rational mind" as from "body's needs" in which we find nothing but "Stillness of desirelessness". The hero links himself to the daughter Flora on account of a mere pity in such a passive posture that this bond between the man and the daughter is necessarily mechanical and automatic in its nature. We cannot always agree to K.Widmer's assertion that at the first island "the willed order" makes Cathcart err, in the second island "negation of will" does.(15)

At this stage we may define his connection with Flora as a false communality, for in this situation we cannot find any entity which is "true, delicate desire between them and a delicate meeting on the third rare place where a man might meet a woman". (737-8) To make matters worse for Cathcart, he is compelled to be driven into the impasse, the bondage as unwilling marriage to Flora. And the childbirth between them gives paradoxically a finishing blow to their counterfeit contact. In other words their child—the would-be symbol of communality—proves inversely to be the fatal crux which forces the man to escape from the second island, because this baby is not the favorable issue of the true, delicate desire between them, but the "millstone tied round his neck". (739)

Here we must pay attention to Lawrence's superb device of ironical plot: on occasion of leaving the first island, the author shows us a satirical setting that the man sells his island as "a handy honeymoon-and-golf island", on the other hand the last scene of the second island is an ironical presentation of disruption of the couple's relationship as well as disintegration of the island itself. We don't feel any sentimentality in this second island where the man's affair with Flora, as it were, is the last chance of linking between himself and the living flux. The failure in this

(15) Widmer, p.13.

relationship goes to cut off him alienated from the whole contact with men and nature.

Now concerning the third island, can we find any aspect of communality? Here is deepened that sort of extreme egotism which brings about the disruption of contact with the other islanders in the first island and his failure in the bond of love with Flora. In this last stage of the story, if the hero has the insight into the mystery of living nature and the cosmic flow, he could gain an organic realization of true communalism as a saint through such a paradoxical negation as an affirmative self-alienation. As his fear of the mysterious nature grows much more severe in effect, Cathcart clings frantically to the fixed will to dispose of the phenomenal world. At the outset in the third island the man is possessed of the finer distinction to get out of the ordinary life, but when all interests leave him, each fact of life becomes grotesque.

Cathcart in the third island, in this way, goes on losing the possibility of "true communality" ; he gets rid of the sheep from the island (741), his cat also disappears one day(743) and even the birds passed away. (744) In the process of his isolation from all living creatures, his communion with whiteness and nothingness is exclusively pursued :

> It was as if all life were drawing away, contracting away from the north, contracting, southwards. "Soon," he said to himself, "it will all be gone, and in all these regions nothing will be alive." He felt a cruel satisfaction in the thought. (744)

To use Freud's word, this state of mind may be called a sort of the drive of Thanatos. And in this case what is yearned for by the hero may be just the "symbiotic" communion with nothingness, which is much more exhaustive than Gerald's case or Clifford's example.

Our hero's tragic trial of putting forth his last spurt in order to dig out the boat from the snow is pathetically symbolical as well as deeply ambiguous. Indeed his desperate behavior apparently seems to be an expression of a positive will seeking after the bond with something, but in fact this should be considered rather as th activity of his challenge to nature than as a deed of pursuing a living contact with it. This is showed distinctively as follows :

> He began to work in a frenzy, to get at his boat. If he was to be shut in, it must be by his own choice, not by the mechanical power of the elements. he must be able to get at his boat.(745)

What drives Cathcart here to such a desperate activity is not so much an urge to

escape as the effort lest he should be entrapped by the mechanical power of nature. This may be defined as the extreme form of communality with nothingness, that is, Cathcart feels that he might as well try a self-destruction by means of his heroic defiance to yield himself to the destructive power of nature. In other words he longs for a kind of cruel satisfaction by virtue of his curious contact with "white nullity."

As suggested in the hero's final situation, however, from the author's viewpoint Cathcart's attitude toward nature should be the extremity of arrogance or haughtiness against the mysterious Life. In short the great cosmic nihilism is much mightier than the petty man's one, and his own choice goes in the wrong direction. Cathcart's mental picture just before his own annihilation is described as follows:

> The wind dropped. Was it night again? In the silence, it seemed he could hear the panther-like dropping of infinite snow. Thunder rumbled nearer, crackled quick after the bleared reddened lighting. He lay in bed in a kind of stupor. The elements! The elements! His mind repeated the word dumbly. You can't against the elements.(746)

In the first island we find Cathcart's drive longing for the idealistic communality in his egotistic and authoritarian Utopia, and through his unwilling bond with Flora in the second island we confront the final tragic picture of Cathcart's awareness. As this transition of Cathcart's communality is rather centripetal, the circle of his existence becomes gradually narrow. Julian Moynahan's following interpretation may be appropriate in a sense: "The story's development may be described as the continual shrinking of a circle around another circle, until the inner circle of the self and the outer circle of the non-self nearly coincide at that moment just before the death with which the story concludes."[16]

We must point out the causes of Cathcart's failure; in the first island the cause is his dependence on the bankrupted authority and his escape from spirit of place which he should have rather willingly accepted; in the second island it is Cathcart's extreme passiveness which compels himself to be involved into his reluctant tie with Flora; since at the third island his choice is communality with nothingness and his recognition of nature is too superficial to discern its intrinsic qualities, his choice itself results in failure owing to nature's greater nihilism. Concluding this chapter we have to point out Cathcart's communality is just false one.

---

(16) Moynahan, p.58.

III

Cathcart devotes himself to pursuit of individuality from start to finish. Although his individuality seems apparently uncomplicated, our close scrutiny illuminates some profound ambiguity in it. Before setting about our analysis of this problem, the necessary procedure we should take may be reaffirmation of strict distinction between false individuality—simple separation or sentimental aloneness—and true individuality—independent isolation going through creative disintegration.

When Cathcart transfers to the first island, that is literally a 'nest' as well as 'a world of his own' : "No, an island is a nest which holds one egg, one only. This egg is the islander himself."(722) Here is expressed the man's posture yearning for isolating from other people, and yet that isolation means only a form of escape to his own nest. This is nothing less than eager longing for his sense of security by means of encircling the wall to protect himself from other's trespass into his own nest. This is the symbol of his orientation to modern capitalistic possessiveness. As he retires into its hard shell in this kind of isolation, there is no room for positive acception of the organic and mysterious influence of the cosmic flow. As above-mentioned the man recoils from the outer world into a pure private world or 'simple self' with his complex fear of the unconscious as to the spirit of place which brings about the night-marish image. And such an attitude also is nothing but appearance of his urge of this negative isolation and his desirable escape from primitive solitude.

Whenever the man is worried about such dark mysteries as the cries of old men of an invisible race, a mourning of blood-stained priest with crucifixes or 'the purple-lipped imprecation of pirates', he is far from getting himself absorbed in those dark mysteries, but shrinks from those night-marish images :

> He had reduced himself to a single point in space, and, a point being that which has neither length nor breadth, he had to step out of it into somewhere else. Just as you must step into the sea, if the waters wash your foothold away, so he had, at night, to step off into the other worlds of undying time.(724)

From the viewpoint of the relation between self and world, as Moynahan also refers to, the development of the story may be described as the continual shrinking of a circle around another circle.[17] While the author considers that those who come into

(17) ibid.

contact with dark spirit and mysterious past have intrinsic strength, Cathcart is described as an escapee who is longing to live in the illusion of his own paradise. This attitude consists of the seed of perfectibility which entails necessarily artificiality in his way of living. One of his interest in the first island is the flower names mentioned in the ancient books:

> Our islander, however, had his own resources. He spent long hours in his library, for he was compiling a book of references to all the flowers mentioned in the Greek and Latin authors. He was not a great classical scholar; the usual public-school equipment. But there are such excellent translations nowadays. And it was so lovely, tracing flower after flower as it blossomed in the ancient world. (727-8)

As suggested in this paragraph, his method of studying flowers is not any direct observation of the natural flowers, but indirect contact with nature through the books in the library. His study of flower, therefore, cannot help being unreal, idealistic and artificial.

The man's individuality at the second island, in a word, is nothing but inconsistent and lukewarm. If he tries to pursue true individualism, it should be queer for him to bring as many as five attendants with him; not only that, concerning his affair with Flora also, it should not be the deed for the man longing for aloneness. Eventually what features the hero's attitude on the second island is his extreme passivity and his lack of subjectivity. We may tell this from the author's description that regards this island as 'a place of refuge'. Such a casual relation with Flora, consequently, is the distinct evidence that Cathcart's individuality is quite false. And his extrication from the second island too is not a search for the positive isolation at all, but indiscriminate escape which is expressed as follows, "And he wanted now to get rid of it, as a man who wants a divorce at any cost."(732)

Then let us take the third island. Cathcart's orientation to aloneness comes to be so absolute that it is quite different from the case in the second island. The man's only satisfaction is the complete separation from every human contact as well as every bond with living things, and at the final outcome he becomes to abhor every thing reminding him of living creatures. This may be called literally an absolute desire for isolation. Cathcart's absorption in it is revealed in the following paragraph;

> Only he still derived his single satisfaction from being

> alone, absolutely alone, with the space soaking into him. The grey sea alone, and the footing of his sea-washed island. No other contact. Nothing human to bring its horror into contact with him. Only space, damp, twilit, sea-washed space! This was the bread of his soul. (742-3)

What must be taken note of here is the similarities between Cathcart and Mellors who has not yet contact with Conny, Lady Chatterley. When he escapes into the woods in place of the island, feeling keenly the overwhelming oppression of phenomenal world—the mechanical civilization and modern men's ego, what is Mellors' response?

> Especially he did not want to come into contact with a woman again. He feared it; for he had a big wound from contacts. He felt if he could not be alone, and if he could not be left alone, he would die. His recoil away from the outer world was complete; his last refuge was this wood; to hide himself there![18]

Mellors' aloneness at this stage bears a close parallel to Cathcart's. And yet the important point is a noticeable difference that Cathcart's singleness reaches down continuously to nothingness, while Mellors' solitude proceeds to seek contact with nature and Conny, and finally achieves it by means of some paradoxical process.

In considering this problem, it is inevitable for us to take account of the theme of "dissolution". Transferring to the third island, he gradually comes to be somnambulistic:

> He no longer worked at his book. The interest had gone. He liked to sit on the low elevation of his island, and see the sea; nothing but the pale, quiet sea. And to feel his mind turn soft and hazy, like the hazy ocean. Sometimes, like a mirage, he would see the shadow of land rise hovering to northwards. It was a big island beyond. But quite without substance.(740)

As the dark autumn deepens, the images of dissolution appear more frequently;

> The dark days of winter drew on. Sometimes there was no real day at all. He felt ill, as if he were dissolving, as if dissolution had already set in inside him.(742)

Cathcart's dissolution showed here is no more than self-dissolution and corruption of consciousness. If a certain condition is fulfilled, as far as it goes, he could obtain

(18) D.H.Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Penguin Books, 1960), p.91.

the bond with the cosmos and belong to its mysteries by dint of merging into nature herself. And what is implied by this condition is to make sure of the direct contact with nature, the world of flowers and beasts, and to devote himself wholeheartedly to his active singleness.

Cathcart's attitude, however, is entirely antithesis to that state of mind. Even whining cat and bleating sheep are cumbersome for him, and crying sea-gulls also vexatious. This drive for an absolute separation deprives him of the only opportunity to make his dissolution organic and creative, and it forces him to take a negative bond which may be called the symbiotic connection with nothingness. Although Mellors' point of departure is the same as Cathcart's, his posture towards isolation aims at very different direction. His aloneness is not escape from the living nature which contains birds, beasts and flowers, but flight from the modern men who are corrupted amid the mechanized civilization And the more exhaustive his seclusion becomes, the more intense his contact with the natural organic world grows.

The self-dissolving moment between Mellors and Conny, which stems from Conny's intrinsic contact with the fascinating 'chickens', leads Mellors to a true communality; this is utterly opposite to Cathcart's case. This 'bond' with Conny is very vulnerable for Mellors who had gone through many hardship since his youth. As his fear of society grows, Mellors comes to realize the necessity of the true bond:

> The connexion between them was growing closer. He could see the day when it would clinch up and they would have to make a life together. 'For the bonds of love are ill to loose!'(19)

In this example we find a distinct contrast between Mellors and Cathcart.

Mellors pursues an organic bond in every opportunity; and as soon as his aloneness is about to be violated, he makes every possible effort to secure it. Here may be alluded the paradox of living disintegration which exists dynamically in Mellors. To be more precise, trying to secure his complete singleness like Cathcart, Mellors who secludes himself in the hard husk of ege gradually comes to perceive that without 'dissolution' of hard ego he could commune with Conny, not to speak of with nature. In order to secure true individuality which is foreign to the symbiotic bond bringing about loss of mental independence, it is inevitably required to make sure of intrinsic bond based upon 'tenderness', not upon mechanicality. What saves Mellors from the symbiotic bond may be the fact that his bond doesn't end up in his

(19) ibid., p.148.

contact with only a woman, but belongs to the cosmic flow through his sexual connection with a woman. So that he loves Conny as a naked woman without any other alien elements like social class, position or sofistication.

The above-mentioned Mellors' case is referred to for the elucidation of the author's basic understanding. True communality as 'cunt-awareness' itself which is completely alien to the social and artificial relationship means establishment of true individuality different from negative response as a simple escape into the woods. On the contrary, Cathcart fails in a true self-dissolution and results in a destructive and literal corruption. He is not only enslaved by his own afflicted will and his hard husk of ego, but also tried arrogantly a challenge to 'the elements', that is, nature herself. This shows that Cathcart has not a genuine awareness on bond. However the process of dissolution may be miserable and bitter, on the whole it signifies 'life' as a close communion with the cosmic flow and implies true communality within the intimate relationship to the rhythm of life and death.

We find in this process a double exposure of both the paradox between bond and isolation, and that between life and death. Here is displayed Cathcart's tragedy that he has no insight into Lawrentian 'whole truth'. At this point we cannot but consider Cathcart's individuality as a false one.

IV

In the preceding two chapters it comes clear to us that both Cathcart's individuality and his communality are false. Strictly speaking, the hero is depicted just as an antithesis to Lawrentian true life, namely, as the negative picture of the hero in *The Man Who Died* and Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Our matter of primary concern falls on why the author should describe such an absolute aloneness as well as a sterile separateness at this very stage of his career.

For one thing we think of the author's biographical circumstance when he writes this work, as Ford points out. In the following letter addressed to Brett on March 8,1927, he complained, "It's no good, for me the human world becomes more and more unreal, more and more wearisome, I am really happiest when I don't see people and never go to town. . . "(20) And he also exclaimed: "I am so tired of it all, Brett, Oh, so tired ! . . . . I would like to buy a sailing ship and sail among the Greek Islands and be free."(21)

We could not, however, go through superficially this fiction, overlooking its

(20) *Letters*. p.680.
(21) Ford, p.85.

profound connotation, as a simply personal expression of Lawrence's occasional feeling at that moment. Indeed the author's despair for human contact happens to appear in those letters, but attaching too much importance to such personal feelings would make us misconstrue this work, for Lawrence's touch is very cool and self-possessed and the style may be called a fable.

At this stage we must reconsider how absolute Cathcart's negative phase is. Generally speaking, in Lawrentian philosophy 'lively badness' is better than 'dead goodness' and 'vital wrongness' is regarded more valuable than 'mechanical rightness', not only that 'intense anger' is much more desirable than 'counterfeit love'. This is the very evidence of Lawrence's aspect of 'life supremacist' which appears in many fictions or essays. For instance we may easily point out the following example:

> Nothing is important but life. And for myself, I can absolutely see life nowhere but in the living. Life with a capital L is only man alive. Even a cabbage in the rain is cabbage alive. All things that are alive are amazing. And all things that are dead are subsidiary to the living. Better a live dog than a dead lion. But better a live lion than live dog. *C'est la vie!*(22)

The characteristics the author gives to Cathcart are 'dead goodness' of a good master, 'mechanical rightness' against nature and 'counterfeit love' for Flora. When we consider that *The Man Who Died,* begun to write two months before the publication of the fable on Cathcart, ends with a positive affirmation of life, the absolute negation in this fable should have something significant.

We can find many Cathcart-like figures in Lawrence's fictions, but we also perceive these destructive or negative characters are always accompanied with the antithetical characters who are redemptive or regenerative, for example, Birkin vs Gerald or Mellors vs Clifford etc. On the contrary Cathcart in *The Man Who Loved Islands* is not matched with such antithetically redemptive figures as Birkin or Mellors.

Considering this theme, we must take up this work within a broader perspective, namely, in the context of the whole Lawrentian works. Then it may become clear that we have to estimate this short story through the paradoxical conception of 'living dissolution', Lawrence's characteristic ambiguity of creative destruction. As K. Widmer asserts, denial and defiance must precede affirmation

(22) D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H.Lawrence* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p.534.

and faith, and more important, must remain part of them.[23] In other words, achievement of 'true life' would be in need of not merely creation and regeneration, but at the same time destruction and negation. Hence comes inevitability of passing through the complete negation in *The Man Who Loved Islands* in order to get up to such a creative affirmation in *The Man Who Died.*

Our preceding argument may clarify the essentially antithetical characteristics of two protagonists, the typical Lawrentian hero in *The Man Who Died* and Cathcart as an anti-hero. The comparison between these two men will help us to elucidate the significance of our given fable.

To begin with, our interest falls upon the theme of 'nausea'. Both Cathcart and 'the man who died' feel nausea frequently. Concerning Cathcart, he suffers from bitter nausea after he gets married to Flora unwillingly; "His desire, whatever it was, died in him with *nausea* (Italics mine). On the other hand, 'the man who died' also is afflicted with intolerable nausea when he resurrects and goes to the farmer's house: "and all that remained now was the great void *nausea* of utter disillusion."[24] (Italics mine) Although at this stage their feelings of nausea have almost same quality, we find two men's feelings of nausea differentiate into the opposite direction each other gradually. As time goes on 'the man who died' begins to experience the intense flaming of natural life flow:

> The man who had died looked nakedly on life, and saw a resoluteness everywhere flinging itself up in stormy or subtle wave-crest, foam-tips emerging out of the blue invisible, a black and orange cock or the green flame-tongues out of the extremes of the fig tree.[25]

In the meantime Cathcart becomes so nauseous to everything that he is driven into a frustrated attitude in which he regards nature as even enemy:

> He had never a tree, not even a bit of heather to guard. Only the turf, and tiny turf-plants, and the sedge by the pool, the seaweed in the ocean. He was glad. He didn't want trees or bushes. They stood up like people, too assertive. His bare, low-pitched island in the pale blue sea was all he wanted.(740)

Thus their antithetical dealings with nature cause them to take the quite different ways of response to nausea.

Our next concern goes to the difference between their mantal attitudes

(23) Widmer, p.249.
(24) *The Man Who Died,* p.8.
(25) ibid., p.10.

toward baby. When Flora gives birth to a daughter, Cathcart gets a fearful shock :

> The daughter was born at last. The father looked at the baby, and felt depressed, almost more than he could bear. The millstone was tied round his neck.(739)

The baby is a literal fetter to Cathcart as well as a detestable bondage from which he must escape at any cost. On the other hand 'the man who died' positively approves of his baby when he is going to leave priestess of Isis, and he says himself as follows :

> I have sowed the seed of my life and my resurrection, and put my touch forever upon the choice woman of this day, and I carry her perfume in my flesh like essence of roses. She is dear to me in the middle of my being.(26)

In Cathcart's case, suffered from false individuality, he makes frantic effort to escape from Flora and the baby who are regarded as a heavy millstone, while 'the man who died' is so wisely penetrating into the paradoxical awareness of true individuality that he willingly accepts the baby as a side-issue of genuine contact.

Many critics put *The Man Who Loved Islands* in the same category with other minor works under such titles as "On Being Alone"(27) or "Parable of Annihilation".(28) Indeed as far as they are separately compared with one another it may be approved, but being viewed in the whole perspective of Lawrentian context this fable on Cathcart occupies quite a different position from these short stories like *The Prussian Officer, Odour of Chrysanthemums* or *The Woman Who Rode Away.*

What we should notice is that the more negativity of Cathcart's as a unique anti-hero grows intense, the more the mysterious power of nature moves fascinatingly the readers. And the falsity of the hero's individuality as well as of his communality is closed up all the more because he struggles for escape from the society. Comparing with Cathcart's recoiling from the cosmic flow, the man of *The Man Who Died* makes a distinct contrast as an incarnation of organic paradox between true individuality and true communality.

Conclusion

As examined in the previous chapters, the true-false ambiguity of Cathcart's

(26) ibid., p.47.
(27) Ford, pp.61-90.
(28) Widmer, pp.3-40.

individuality and communality has a complicated connotation, with which we readers are forced to be greatly puzzled. At first Cathcart transfers to the first island for a tiny community. But he is so vexed with his own egotistic authority, his cool rationality and his fear of spirit of place, that he completely fails in realization of his idea of communality. Not only that the original aim of coming to the first island, namely, his assurance of individuality, is deterred by his own possessiveness, sentimentality and modern comercialism.

In the second island as a 'refuge' we cannot find any positive posture in Cathcart, whose reluctant bond with Flora symbolizes that his communality is nothing but false. As a natural consequence he is forced to escape from this intolerable situation, longing for the absolute individuality.

At the third island the hero seems to obtain his own firm distinction. But all interests had hardly left him when every fact of life for him gets to be grotesque, so that his yearning for the ideal turns to self-hatred or self-destruction. Since such an attitude as Cathcart's is no less than dissolution into death, he who feels an extreme ecstasy in negation is bound to fall into a simple self-annihilation : that is literally false individuality.

Thus Cathcart is caught in a vicious circle of false communality and false individuality, so he is destined to be reduced to 'cold' and 'white' death. Here we cannot but recollect the quite antithetical characters like Birkin, Mellors and the hero of *The Man Who Died,* who are already referred in the previous chapters. All of them grow to be able to penetrate into the paradox of creative dissolution, after their long wanderings through both phenomenal and mental worlds. And they recognize the so-called true-false dichotomy of communality and individuality. According to Lawrentian thought-pattern, the consummation of true communality requires necessarily true individuality, and vice versa. Through that process the creative hero like Mellors understands the simultaneous incarnation of Lawrentian paradox between dissolution toward death and dissolution toward relief. In other words, without disintegration of false individuality based upon the hard ego, nothing could make an organic contact with true communality, while except for abandonment of symbiotic false communality nobody could achieve true individuality sustained by creativity of dissolution.

On his way to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Man Who Died,* it must be momentous for Lawrence to bring a tragic modern man into a close-up, by means of creating such a drastic anti-hero as Cathcart at the very stage of his career. We may, therefore, read this fiction as one of anti-utopia. Usually anti-utopia sets out from a discontent of the present situation, and proceeds to show the more rational

objects in order to criticize the actual irrationality: meanwhile anti-utopia, under the pretext of treating phenomena logically, criticizes the actuality of the world by means of impelling the logic into an extremely grotesque conclusion, i.e. *reductio ad absurdum.*

We should bear it in mind, however, that the intentional reading for a didactic meaning would detract this work from the value. As Ford also feels, we are lured to have a little compassion on Cathcart's way of life as well as his reductive process. When we have a distant view of the gigantic evil power of the modern industrial world beyond Cathcart's completely isolated posture, we are moved with something tragic. Only when the well-known phrase "Ours is essentially a tragic age" at the opening of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is read in this context, truely great significance may be revealed to us.

Closing this paper we should like to emphasize again that we must read this work not only as an independent and self-completed fiction, but also in the organic sequence of the whole Lawrentian context.

(Oct. 31, 1974)